

# TOWARDS A REGION WHERE EVERY CHILD COUNTS



**SIEM REAP – ANGKOR DECLARATION  
OF THE SEVENTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC  
MINISTERIAL CONSULTATION ON CHILDREN**

**23-25 March 2005  
Siem Reap, Cambodia**



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## SIEM REAP – ANGKOR DECLARATION OF THE SEVENTH EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC MINISTERIAL CONSULTATION ON CHILDREN

1. We, the delegations of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Viet Nam met at the Seventh Ministerial Consultation on Children in Siem Reap – Angkor, Cambodia from 23 to 25 March 2005. We note the considerable progress made by the countries of East Asia and Pacific in improving the situation of children in the region and in strengthening our commitment through legislation, policy and programme interventions. We note with satisfaction the positive engagement at the Seventh Ministerial Consultation of all government delegations. We acknowledge with gratitude the active participation of a number of partners, including civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and development partners. We are especially proud of the active participation of children and young people in the young people's forum during this Consultation and appreciative of the suggestions and recommendations received from them.

2. We are saddened by the huge loss of lives, mostly of children, in the Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster that struck our region on 26 December 2004. We express our deep sympathy to those who lost loved ones and solidarity with those communities and governments that are now engaged in the massive undertaking of recovery and reconstruction. We applaud the enormous outpouring of generosity from the peoples of the world in support of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts for the victims of the Tsunami, noting that a very large proportion of those contributions came from ordinary members of the public, including in affected and non-affected countries of East Asia and Pacific. We thank the many governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals, including children, who aided or took part in the response to the Tsunami. We note how this disaster highlighted the vulnerability of poor children and families to such natural disasters and express the hope that more concerted efforts could be deployed in the future in disaster preparedness and response and in reduction of vulnerability in all cases and in all countries.
  
3. We reaffirm our commitment to facilitate the realization of the rights of all our children, as expressed in our universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and wide ratification of its two Optional Protocols – on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography –, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and other relevant human rights instruments. We are committed to our ongoing efforts to achieve progress against internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children: ‘A World Fit for Children’. We re-affirm our determination to attain these goals and to monitor and report on progress at the five-year review of the Millennium Summit in 2005 and of the Special Session on Children in 2007.

4. The pursuit and progressive realization of children's rights is central to our strategies for sustainable development. Not only are these inalienable entitlements of all children, they are of crucial importance to build human capacity for equitable development of societies. We note with satisfaction the positive contributions of children and young people within our own countries and in this Ministerial Consultation. We recognize the importance of responding to the views of children and are committed to enhancing avenues for their meaningful participation in all levels and aspects of life. We recognize too that the realization of children's rights is inextricably linked to the furtherance of the rights of women.
  
5. The series of Ministerial Consultations, begun in 1991, has proven a valuable opportunity for us to focus on efforts to achieve children's rights through exchange of ideas and experience and the development of strategies for regional cooperation, and they have had positive, practical outcomes. We recall the Bali Consensus on Partnerships with and for Children in the East Asia and Pacific Region adopted in May 2003, which reaffirmed our commitments made at the Millennium Summit and the Special Session on Children, with particular attention to HIV/AIDS, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, maternal and neonatal mortality and malnutrition – special challenges to us all in this region. It also reminded us of the importance of quality education for all children as a means towards a better society and of the need to attain the goals of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012). It facilitated the signing by six countries of the region of a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The Sixth Ministerial Consultation further reminded us of the targets we have set for 2005 and 2010 and the need for urgent action leading to their attainment.

6. We recall too the First East Asia Ministerial Forum on Families held in April 2004 in Hanoi, Viet Nam, co-organized by the Governments of Viet Nam and Australia. This reminded us of the centrality of the family in the lives of all peoples and especially of its importance for the nurturing, development and protection of children, and of the need for appropriate legislation, policy and programmes directed at supporting families and strengthening their positive influence on children. We look forward to the Second Ministerial Forum on Families in Singapore in 2006 and believe strongly in the complementarity and synergy of these two series of ministerial conferences.
7. East Asia and the Pacific encompasses the most and least populous countries of the world, spans the largest and most diverse geographic area and has wide differences in per capita income. The region is home to people of many different cultures, ethnicities and languages. Yet, its people have much in common, have mutual interests and have much to learn through close collaboration. Children's rights are fundamental to all cultures and societies. There is great value to fora, such as this Ministerial Consultation, that allow for the exchange of ideas and technical experience and expertise among developing and developed countries in the region.
8. We recognize the resource and capacity constraints faced by the region in combating poverty and promoting sustainable development. We reaffirm the commitments on financial resources to encourage governments to allocate at least 20 per cent of all national, regional and local budgets for basic social services, and donor countries to allocate at least 20 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) for basic social services, as agreed at the Copenhagen Social Summit in 1995. We urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP as ODA to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and we encourage developing

countries to build on progress in ensuring that ODA is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. We acknowledge the efforts of all donors, commend those donors whose ODA contributions exceed, reach or are increasing towards the targets, and underline the importance of undertaking to examine the means and time frames for achieving these targets and goals. Such assistance to developing countries should be provided in line with national development priorities and in such a way that it contributes to enhancing national capacity.

## KEY CHALLENGES TO MEETING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

9. In 2003 in Bali we identified the HIV/AIDS pandemic, child trafficking and the related sexual exploitation of children, as well as maternal and neonatal mortality and child malnutrition as key issues within the region that seriously limit our development potential and collectively could even reverse some of our gains if they are not given special attention. We acknowledged that resolving these difficult problems will continue to require our concerted efforts and commitment. We also recognized that maintaining peace and stability and the eradication of poverty are essential for achieving all development goals and ensuring the well-being of children.

10. These issues remain important to us in our pursuit of development goals, the realization of children's rights and the building of just societies. While we recognize that we have achieved important progress in all of these areas, much remains to be done. We have therefore focused on some key related challenges we need to address to complete the Bali agenda:
  - a. Rapid economic and social changes in the region have resulted in much progress, but this is not spread equitably and has contributed to increasing **disparities**.
  - b. **Adolescents** and young people now form a large and growing segment of our populations, and are the group most at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and of other dangers.
  - c. Though we have made great strides over the past two decades in improving **child survival, growth and development**, there are continuing challenges to achieve the goal of reducing child mortality, and to assure optimal early childhood development.

### *Reducing disparities and inequity*

11. We are concerned that in many countries wide gaps exist between different groups in society and/or regions in the country which exacerbate the vulnerability of children to malnutrition, ill health, exclusion from education, neglect, and all forms of exploitation. The implications for children of disparity and inequity can be severe: increased vulnerability to trafficking and other forms of exploitation, and lack of access to and utilization of services necessary for survival and development. Prolonged and unaddressed disparities can cause or inflame latent social tensions leading to instability. Systemic disparities between groups are unjust and a violation of international conventions and other commitments. A human rights based approach requires the realization of rights for all on an inclusive and non-discriminatory basis. Development strategies have to be formulated with a view to minimizing the negative social impact of globalization and maximizing its positive impact, while ensuring that all groups of the population benefit from it.

12. We are aware of multiple disparities in countries of East Asia and the Pacific. These include:

- geographic disparities, usually due to remoteness, including the special situation of small island states, extremes of climate or terrain and/or sparse population density, which lead to lower levels of social service provision and lower social indicators;
- ethnic disparities, with minorities often living in remote mountainous or desert areas or faraway islands, and sometimes also subject to lower levels of health and education even in capital cities;
- rural-urban disparities with investment generally favouring urban families and children;
- disparities related to socially disadvantaged groups, such as migrant workers, refugees and displaced people (including those displaced due to natural and man-made disasters and civil conflict), the urban and peri-urban poor and people living with disabilities or HIV/AIDS and their families;
- gender disparities that generally negatively affect women and girls; and
- inherent disparity experienced by children due to their lower social status.

Often these disparities are multiple. The poorest and most vulnerable families and children can belong to many of the groups enumerated above.

13. We recognize that there are a number of factors that may contribute to and perpetuate disparities. These include:

- rapid economic and social changes due to globalization;
- unregulated economic growth with less priority given to issues of distribution;
- unregulated privatization of key services – health, education and water – that helps to perpetuate existing disparities and create new ones;
- concentration of investment in already developed areas;
- inability of local governments to provide adequate basic social services due to limited resources and capacities; and
- HIV/AIDS as a generator and perpetuator of poverty and disparity.

14. In order to advance the rights of all children and women, we will continue our efforts to address the issue of disparities. We shall take the necessary steps to generate the disaggregated and sub-national data and information needed to better apprehend geographic, ethnic, gender and other disparities, to adopt policies and formulate programmes adapted to the differentiated situation of socially disadvantaged families and children, to increase public investment in health, education, water supply, and sanitation, transport and communications services, to ensure access for all, and to develop the capacity and authority of local administrators and communities to better plan for and implement action to reduce disparity.

### *Advancing adolescent development*

15. We are well aware that adolescents represent a growing segment of our populations, and that there are social, economic, political and cultural barriers in realizing their full potential. In 2001 in Beijing, we noted from the youth survey 'Speaking Out' that young people feel disaffected from our societies and largely unlistened to. In 2003 in Bali, we also noted that there is a shortfall of policy in our region to foster the positive development of young people and, therefore, resolved to address this issue at the Seventh Ministerial Consultation.
16. We recognize that adolescents and young people have particular health, nutritional and protection needs, including prevention of risky behaviour and nurturing physical, social and mental wellbeing in youth-friendly health services.
17. We also recognize that young people are significantly affected by limited educational opportunities and livelihood options even as they seek to become active citizens. This creates significant vulnerability to trafficking for labour or sexual exploitation and is a potential cause of social unrest.

18. In the civil conflicts that have affected a number of our countries, adolescents and young people have formed significant parts of armed groups and have been exploited as combatants and suffered negative consequences of these conflicts, whether as combatants themselves or merely as bystanders. There is a need for recovery and counselling for such young people.
19. We are convinced, however, that our young people represent one of the most positive forces in our societies. They are also our immediate next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, artists, workers, farmers and other valued members of society, and thus deserve special nurturing and the opportunity to participate fully in their own development. The young are naturally energetic and optimistic. With positive support and relevant strategies, they can be our greatest asset.
20. We shall effectively design and implement innovative strategies for addressing critical issues impacting on adolescents and young people. We shall give special attention to analysis of their problems and to improve mechanisms that foster the expression of their views and their active participation in all matters that concern them. We shall encourage and support the engagement of families as key players in providing guidance and appropriate care to their adolescent children.
21. To the extent of available resources and capacities, we shall strive to assure that all adolescents have the opportunity to benefit from the positive influence of secondary and continuing education, including vocational training, informed by the views and active participation of adolescents themselves. We call on UNICEF and other key partners to continue to provide intellectual leadership and engage in technical cooperation, so that we may continue to advance our approaches for the positive development of adolescents.

## *Improving child survival, growth and development*

22. We have achieved much in reducing child mortality through the expanded programme on immunization and better management of children's illnesses. However, we still have much to do to achieve our goals and targets on child survival, growth and development. As we noted in 2003 in Bali, most child mortality in East Asia and the Pacific now occurs in the first year, often in the first month, of life. We also noted the insufficient progress in reducing child and maternal malnutrition, and in reducing maternal deaths.
  
23. New scientific advances reveal that the most important determinants of child survival, growth and development are foetal development and optimal infant and young child feeding. We shall therefore increase attention to health and nutritional interventions targeted at adolescent girls and young women prior to or undergoing their first pregnancies. We shall take steps to discourage under-age pregnancies. We shall strengthen efforts to provide a safe delivery to mothers by trained birth attendants, who are also equipped to respond to the condition of the vulnerable newborn baby, and to register all births. As more than half of all infant and child deaths are attributed to underlying undernutrition, we will link our curative child survival strategies with those that emphasize preventive measures of adequate nutrition, including exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and improved water, sanitation, personal and environmental hygiene. We shall sustain and strengthen our responses to reduce the impact on mortality of vaccine preventable diseases (including the introduction of new vaccines in our immunization programmes), diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and malaria. We shall also strive to reduce the impact of injuries as a contributing factor in child mortality and disability.

24. We recognize that in order to reach all children in society it will be necessary to implement more innovative interventions that may incur additional costs and require increased investment. We shall find ways to guarantee free or affordable services to all members of society. We recognize that the survival, growth and development of our children is a national public good that will guarantee the future success of our societies, and that, as such, it is worthy of a significant investment of public funds and resources. We call on UNICEF and other appropriate partners to continue to provide intellectual leadership and technical cooperation, so that we may continue to advance our achievement in the area of child survival, growth and development.

## GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR THE SIEM REAP – ANGKOR DECLARATION

25. We agree that the goals for the Siem Reap – Angkor Declaration shall be the reaffirmation of the global goals we have set already, most notably the goals related to children, young people and women contained within the Millennium Declaration and the 'A World Fit for Children' goals, and of the focus areas for regional cooperation through effective partnerships addressed in the Bali Consensus. We also recognize the important role of the family in achieving the goals and strategies outlined below.
26. In East Asia and the Pacific, we have noted that achieving these goals present particular challenges related to disparity reduction, adolescents and the need to improve child survival, growth and development. Our key strategies to overcome these challenges will include:

## Reducing disparities and inequity

- Expand and improve sub-national and other disaggregated data systems providing usable information on those most affected by disparities.
- Strengthen sub-national implementing bodies to deliver services to under-served and un-reached groups.
- Increase public investment in basic social (health, education, water, sanitation) and economic (infrastructure, communication) services going to under-served regions and groups.
- Promote gender equality, *inter alia*, by raising the status of girls and women, increasing, where under-represented, their access to education, health and other social services, and enhancing their participation in economic life.
- Increase understanding of negative attitudes and behavioural inequalities so as to remove obstacles to the participation of children as partners in their own development.

## Advancing adolescent development

- Establish appropriate or enhance existing mechanisms for coordination of assessment, analysis, policy making and interventions on adolescent development and participation, to include the involvement of adolescents themselves.
- Scale up HIV/AIDS prevention programmes targeted specifically at adolescents through life skills-based education and adolescent-friendly health services.
- Improve protection for adolescents from exploitation, abuse and violence through more effective law enforcement, targeted economic and poverty reduction policies and awareness-raising and mobilization.
- Increase enrolment in secondary schools, making special efforts to reduce dropouts.
- Strengthen sensitive drug and substance abuse and smoking prevention programmes for adolescents.
- Strengthen strategies to assist adolescents to determine their identity in a rapidly changing socio-cultural environment.

## Improving child survival, growth and development

- Reduce perinatal and neonatal deaths, through a focused approach towards young women approaching or undergoing first pregnancy, assuring appropriate prenatal care and delivery by skilled health personnel.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and strengthen water, sanitation and the indoor environment (domestic smoke control and promotion of smoking-free areas) to help prevent diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, other illnesses and malnutrition.
- Promote exclusive breast feeding for the first six months of life, and continue for up to two years with the appropriate introduction of complementary feeding, consistent with the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, International Code on Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, and Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding.
- Assure high coverage of immunization, progressively introducing appropriate new vaccines.
- Implement newer technologies for diarrhoeal disease control using hypo-osmolar oral rehydration salts and zinc supplementation.
- Ensure universal birth registration.
- Promote integrated and comprehensive delivery of early childhood and adolescent care and development programmes and intensify advocacy of positive values in all educational and capacity building programmes for holistic development of children.
- Enhance community ownership through participatory processes.

## PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

27. In our actions to realize the rights of all children in this region we will be governed by the following principles:
  - a. We shall ensure that all policies and actions that affect children and young people are guided by the spirit and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and give the highest priority – ‘first call’ – to the health, development, protection and well-being of children and young people in national and local development plans, poverty reduction strategies and in development cooperation.
  - b. We shall strive to ensure peace and stability in order to guarantee the fulfillment of the rights of all children and young people.
  - c. We understand that education underpins all aspects of development and that improvements in its accessibility, equity and quality are fundamental to achieving our goals. We recognize that basic education for all and the creation of literate societies are essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child and maternal morbidity and mortality, managing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development.
  - d. We shall promote the active and meaningful participation and empowerment of women, children and young people in all activities that affect their lives.
  - e. We acknowledge the important role of civil society and shall work in close partnership with civil society organizations.
  - f. We recognize the important role played by interdisciplinary national bodies for children in the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and shall strive to strengthen them, *inter alia*, through regional cooperation.

- g. We recognize the importance of engaging the private sector to share responsibility for the realization of children's rights.
- h. We shall give priority to disaster preparedness, mitigation and response, especially to reduce the impact of disasters, including new contagious diseases, on children.
- i. We recognize the need for accurate data as a prerequisite for effective planning, policy development and monitoring and evaluation.
- j. We shall reduce disparities and inequities and eliminate discrimination by reaching out to all children, young people and women, especially the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized, recognizing that this may require a greater proportion of government spending on basic social services.
- k. We recognize the need to address violence against children and to participate in the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children.
- l. We emphasize that the most important and influential contributors to a child's survival, growth development and protection are the child's parents, family and community and shall strive to enhance their capacity to care for, nurture and protect their children.
- m. We embrace the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained within the Millennium Declaration and 'A World Fit for Children', and the commitments made at our Ministerial Consultations as our shared agenda to create a better future for children.
- n. We recognize our own progress, capacity and potential so that we can work together to enhance economic and technical cooperation among countries in the region for the eradication of poverty, achievement of common prosperity and the resolution of serious problems affecting children, young people and women.

- o. We recognize the need for close coordination between national and local governments and the need to enable local governments to be active partners in the fulfillment of the rights of the child.
- p. We bear in mind the many human rights and development goals to which we are committed and shall lend our best efforts to achieve them.

## THE SIEM REAP – ANGKOR DECLARATION

- 28. We unanimously adopt this, the Siem Reap – Angkor Declaration.
- 29. We look forward to meeting at the Eighth Ministerial Consultation to again review the situation and achievements for children.
- 30. We thank the Royal Government and people of Cambodia, particularly from Siem Reap – Angkor, and UNICEF for organizing this Seventh Ministerial Consultation for Children.

